DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CRP 00-163-0567 8124562
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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

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November 21, 196

The Honorable Edmund S. Muskie
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

During the past several months leaders of the Christian community in the U.S. and other countries have been shocked by the callous display of arbitrary power being exercised by South Korea's Government in the trial of Kim Dae-Jung and his co-defendants. Not only was the trial a travesty of all standards of due process, but the sentencing and appeals procedures have shown that Mr. Kim and the others are to serve as an example to all critics of the regime that opposition will not be tolerated.

It has been brought to the attention of the Human Rights Office by a very reliable source in South Korea that the Government is now developing a campaign for support of the imposed penalties. On October 25 the editors of three of South Korea's most important newspapers, Dong-A Ilbo, Cho-Sun Ilbo and Han-Kook Ilbo, were called to the Blue House. They were advised by the Minister of Interior and officials of the KCIA that the Government would like for them to initiate a "spontaneous" popular demand that Kim Dae-Jung be executed and that the others be punished and sentenced. Furthermore, the Supreme Court is pressuring the defendants' lawyers to provide all the necessary documents for the appeal by November 25. It is rumored that they wish to announce their decision by December 5th.

Major leaders of religious bodies throughout the world have appealed to the Government of South Korea to seriously reconsider its strategy in this case. The execution of anyone related to the Kim Dae-Jung trial will do irreparable damage to the image of South Korea. Any other government or individual who supports South Korea either overtly or by silence will undoubtedly share in the condemnation by world public opinion.

Because the United States is recognized as the major ally of South Korea it carries a particular responsibility to utilize every diplomatic instrument it has available to pressure for the full exhonoration of the defendants. To do less would implicate the U.S. in the destruction of precious human beings and the democratic leadership that is so important for South Korea's future. Time for quiet diplomacy has passed. The Carter Administration, if its human rights policy is

The Honorable Edmund S. Muskie
June 11, 1980

not to be remembered as empty rhetoric, must make clear to the South Korean Government, to the citizens of the U.S., and to world public opinion, that it cannot tolerate the injustice perpetrated on Kim Daejung and his colleagues.

Very truly yours,

William L. Wipfler

WLW/nog

cc.: Ms. Patricia Derian
Assistant Secretary for Human Rights

Mr. Jeffrey H. Smith
Office of the Legal Advisor

JUN 12 1980